

Inspection of The Helix Education Centre

94 Uxbridge Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 6DH

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join the school having had difficulties in managing their behaviour and emotions in previous settings. Nevertheless, pupils settle quickly. This is because warm and nurturing relationships exist between pupils and staff at this school.

Staff have high expectations for behaviour and learning. They provide pupils with the time, space and skills to sort out any issues they may have. Pupils respond by doing their best to meet the school's high expectations of them. For example, each morning, pupils greet staff respectfully. They are ready for the security checks and ready to hand in their phone. The school's welcoming approach helps to establish clear routines and expectations for pupils.

Pupils know that staff will quickly resolve any fallings-out or incidents of bullying. Most pupils behave well throughout the school day. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. While some pupils find managing their behaviour challenging, behaviour in lessons does not typically distract others from their learning. Any small behaviour outbursts are quickly dealt with.

Parents and carers are happy with their child's progress and like the way the curriculum is adapted to suit pupils' needs. Parents are full of praise for the school and its leadership. They told inspectors, 'Staff are always there when you need them.' This empathetic approach has built a trust between home and school that some parents have never experienced before.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

When a pupil joins the school, staff work with the pupil's family and previous school to build an accurate understanding of their needs. Staff develop high-quality, individual support plans to address all of the pupil's additional learning needs.

The curriculum meets pupils' diverse needs. The school prioritises addressing social, emotional and mental health needs along with subjects such as English and mathematics. This approach helps previously disengaged pupils to succeed on returning to mainstream schools.

Reading is an important part of the curriculum. Staff use carefully thought-through strategies to support any pupil who finds reading more difficult. Pupils regularly read aloud in class. For those who are more reluctant to read, staff skilfully engineer other opportunities for reading. As a result, many pupils become more confident and fluent readers.

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. They understand what to teach and when. They make sure that pupils learn and choose the correct vocabulary. They help pupils to discuss and present their ideas verbally. Teachers use facilities and equipment well to support learning, for instance to help pupils understand mathematical ideas. As a result, pupils make secure progress through the curriculum in most subjects. However,

sometimes teachers design tasks that do not support pupils' needs closely enough. Consequently, some pupils find the work too difficult or too easy for them, which slows their progress through the curriculum.

A strength of the school is the way it develops pupils' personal skills and prepares them for adulthood. Pupils benefit from opportunities to enhance their broader development. They demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental British values, and know that it is important to treat other people with fairness and respect.

In the hospital setting, the staff's approach is expertly tailored to the needs of individual pupils. They complete work that matches what their peers are learning in their mainstream setting. This ensures that they are not disadvantaged when they return to their own school.

Staff know that pupils' attendance at school is critical to both their learning and safeguarding. The school has successfully identified the barriers that prevent pupils coming to school, and has used this information to target support. As a result, the attendance of some pupils improves considerably. Despite this, however, a small number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough and absences remain high overall.

There is a high proportion of staff vacancies and staff absence. This means that it is a challenge for leaders to maintain their high expectations across the school. Leaders and governors know this and have already started meaningful work to secure a more stable staff team.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They believe that leaders are considerate of their workload and always ready to listen to their views.

Leaders and governors have continued to improve the school since the last inspection. Governors know their school well. They have effective systems to ensure they give well-considered challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Despite considerable work to improve attendance, a small number of pupils are persistently absent and overall absence remains high. This means that some pupils do not benefit as often as they should from the good quality of education that the school provides. The school should ensure that all of the strategies it uses to improve attendance enable more pupils to improve their attendance.

- Some learning activities are not closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils find them too hard or too easy. This means that sometimes pupils do not receive the high quality of education that leaders intend. The school should ensure that all staff have sufficient skills and experience to meet leaders' ambitions for the delivery of the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	102180
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	10345787
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Seeta Mepani
Headteacher	Paa-King Maselino
Website	www.thehelix.harrow.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 November 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school includes three different types of provision.
- The Helix Education Centre provides for pupils who have been excluded from mainstream school or who have been out of school for reasons related to their behaviour. These pupils have often moved or have been excluded from more than one school. The pupil population changes throughout the year as the centre also provides short respite packages for pupils from local mainstream schools who are at risk of exclusion.
- In addition, the centre runs an education service at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital for children and young people admitted as patients on a short-term, medium-term or recurring basis. These children remain on the roll of their home schools.
- The school also provides home tuition for pupils who are unable to attend school because they are physically or mentally unwell.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use any providers of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. Inspectors spoke with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including in relation to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff to understand how workload and well-being are considered in the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jamie Hallums

Ofsted Inspector

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